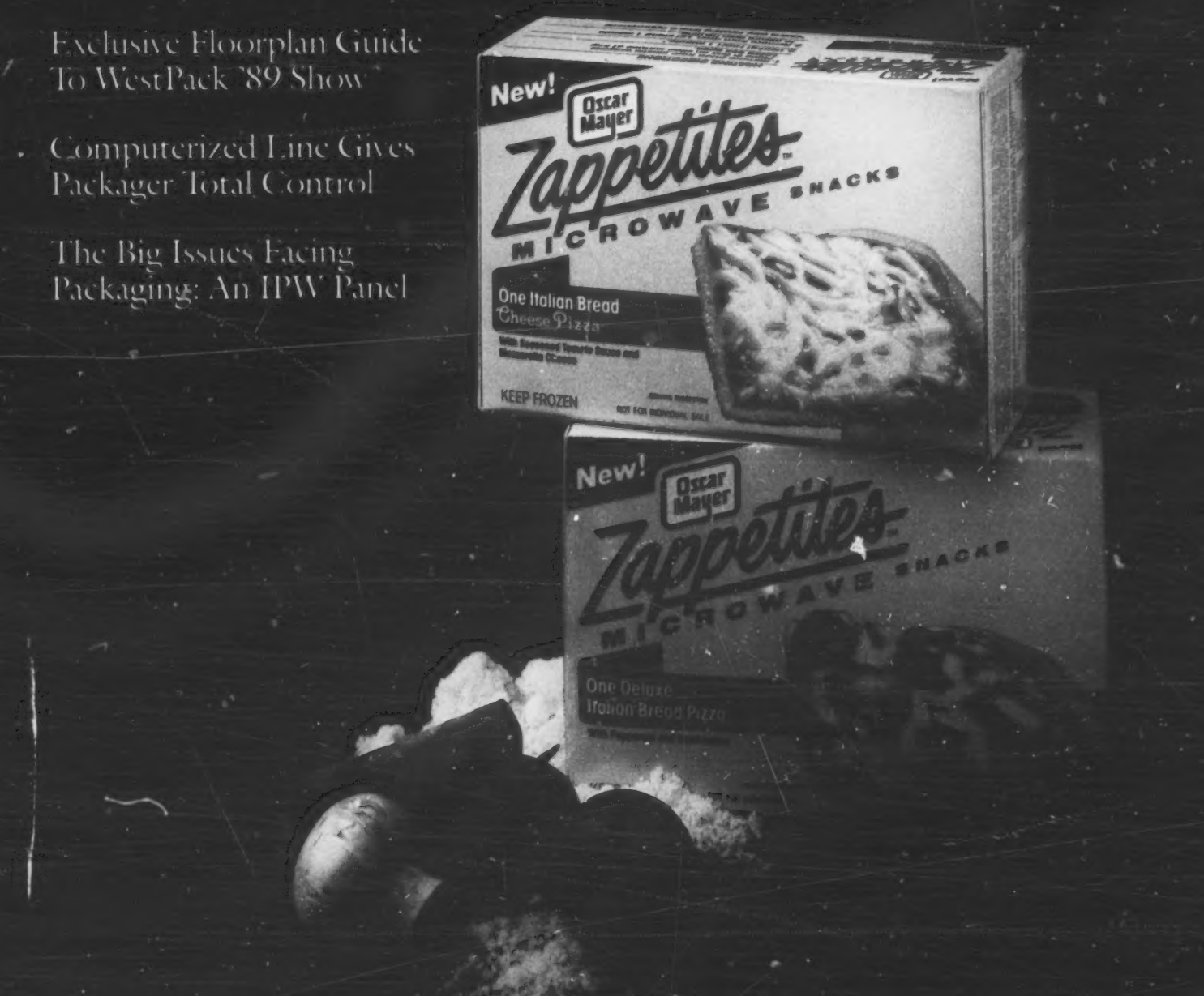
PACKAGING

C1850-1

THE CAHNERS MAGAZINE FOR DECISION-MAKERS/OCTOBER 1989

- Exclusive Floorplan Guide To WestPack '89 Show
- Computerized Line Gives Packager Total Control
- The Big Issues Facing Packaging: An IPW Panel



CONTENTS

A CAHNERS PUBLICATION VOLUME 34 NUMBER 14

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PACKAGING NEWS

Traditional Kiwi treat Vegemite bows in PET jars 8
Redesign hits the mark for Stolichnaya vodka 10
Cahners Economics sees slowdown in 1990 food price increases 17
Americans will pay extra for "green products" 29

PACKAGING FEATURES

STATE OF THE ART

Are microwave susceptors safe? 38
Industry seeks answers to FDA's questions about migration at browning and crisping temperatures

PACKAGING OPERATIONS

Plant of the Month: Total-info system runs line minute by minute 44
Short runs, frequent changeovers are no bar to peak output, yet with no accumulators or staging areas

Distributors help raise productivity 80
PACKAGING's panel agrees: Distributors have moved far beyond the role of middlemen

SPECIAL REPORTS

Problem solvers face big issues, IPW panel finds 70
Today's problems include a new priority: the pervasive environmental factor

WestPack '89 At-Show Guide 84
Banquets, receptions and a roundtable discussion on distributors highlight last-minute details

WestPack '89 Floor Plan of Exhibits 85
An easy-to-use reference to WestPack '89 exhibitors and their booth locations

PACKAGING TECHNOLOGY

Sterile molding technology looks for expanded uses 112
Sterile blow-molding works for orange juice. Now it's available for new products

Filler monitor finds low-filling valve immediately 121
Coder matches speeds for perishable product 121
Space-saving shipping pack saves $650,000 139
Re-packaged bathroom items upgrade product image 139

DEPARTMENTS

EDITORIAL	3	PEOPLE	24	CLASSIFIED	142
NEW PACKAGES	8	ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS	29	ADVERTISERS INDEX	151
PACKAGING NEWS	17	NEW EQUIPMENT	119	WRAP UP	152
ASSOCIATION NEWS	22	NEW MATERIALS	137	READER SERVICE CARD	153

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PACKAGING formerly Package Engineering including Modern Packaging (ISSN 0746-3820) is published monthly, except in February, March, June, and August when two issues are published, in national, demographic and separate editions by The Cahners Publishing Company, A Division of Reed Publishing USA, 275 Washington Street, Newton MA 02158-1630. Terrence M. McDermott, President; Charles E. Moodhe, Senior Vice President/General Manager, Chicago Division; Jerry D. Neth, Vice President/Publishing Operations; J.J. Walsh, Financial Vice President/Magazine Division; Thomas J. Dellamaria, Vice President/Production and Manufacturing. Circulation records are maintained at Cahners Publishing Company, 44 Cook Street, Denver, CO 80206-5800. Phone 303/388-4511. Second-class postage paid at Denver, CO 80206-5800 and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address corrections to PACKAGING at our Denver address. PACKAGING formerly Package Engineering including Modern Packaging, copyright 1989 by Reed Publishing USA; Ronald G. Segel, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer; Robert L. Krakoff, President and Chief Operating Officer; William M. Platt, Sr. Vice President.

ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS

Americans Will Pay Extra For 'Green' Products

Design firm reports survey findings

According to a new survey, more than three-quarters of all American consumers will pay extra for "green"—that is, recyclable or biodegradable—packaging.

The Michael Peters Group, which bills itself as the world's largest independent design and new-product development consultancy, hired the polling firm of Penn and Schoen to conduct a nationwide telephone survey of 1,000 adults last summer. The survey revealed that 49 percent of consumers polled would pay up to five percent extra for products in packaging that was degradable or recyclable.

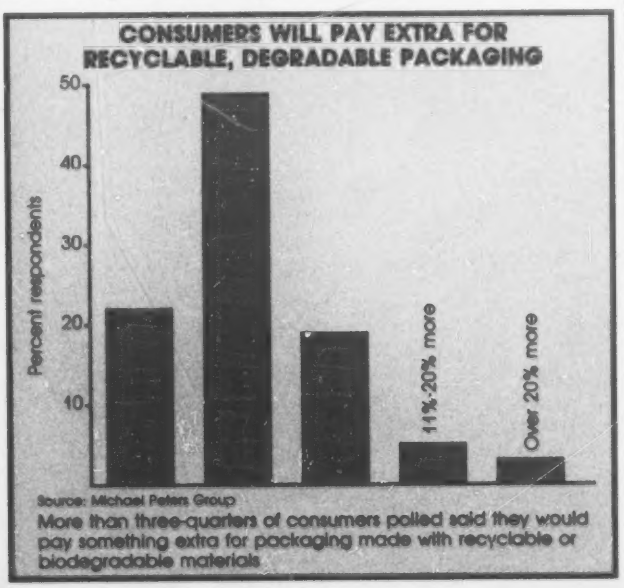
Dorothy MacKenzie, who heads MPG's new-product development division, says, "We believe that just as the Eighties saw a proliferation of 'lite' products designed to meet growing consumer health awareness, the Nineties will be the decade of 'green' products—products designed, packaged and marketed with a strong environmental perspective."

A similar MPG survey of consumers in Canada showed slightly less willingness to pay more for "green" packaging: About three-fifths of the Canadian respondents said they would spend something extra.

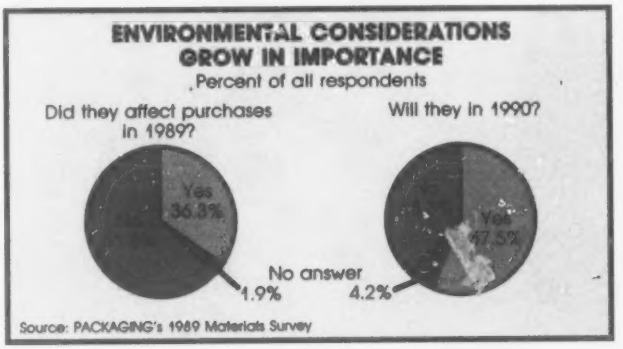
Among other findings, MPG's study shows that 89 percent of Americans are concerned about the environmental impact of the products they purchase; 53 percent declined to buy a product over the past year because of their concern about the possible environmental effect of the product or its packaging; 77 percent say their purchase decisions are affected by a company's reputation on environmental issues; 11 percent say they think business is doing a good job of safeguarding the environment.

On the last point, Michael Peters, chairman and creative director, says, "While the public believes that corporate America is generally aware of the environmental impact of its products, they don't see that awareness translating into action."

Also in the U.S. study, 84 percent of respondents say they feel the federal government should enact legislation requiring manufacturers to use biodegradable or recyclable packaging. Says Peters, "The 'greening' of the American consumer represents both a challenge and an opportunity for anyone doing business in the American marketplace. Clearly," he adds, "it's the smart marketer who will choose to act *before* legislation makes change imperative."



More than three-quarters of consumers polled said they would pay something extra for packaging made with recyclable or biodegradable materials



Environment Affects Materials Use

Study reveals growing concern

A recent survey of PACKAGING magazine's readership shows packagers increasingly selecting materials and supplies on the basis of environmental concerns.

Asked whether environmental considerations affected their materials use in 1989, only 36.3 percent of our respondents said yes. Asked whether those considerations would affect materials use in 1990, 57.5 percent said yes.

A full report on the survey appeared in our September issue.

City Of Berkeley Calls For Precycling

Shoppers urged to shun plastic packages

The goal is to encourage consumers to make environmentally wise product-purchase decisions while in the store. That's enviable. But the City of Berkeley, Calif., is going about it in a way that erroneously endorses the concept of biodegradability and unfairly criticizes plastic packaging for not being degradable.

A poster published recently by City of Berkeley Recycling introduces the new program this way:

"We call it precycling. Sometimes the answers to our biggest problems are right within our reach. In this case, one solution to our waste problem may be in what we reach for on the supermarket shelf.

"We've spent years directing our attention to the 'recycling' of consumer products. This year we decided to take a fresh look at the problem, and we came up with this both obvious and overlooked idea: *precycling*."

The poster goes on, 'precycling means making intelligent, environmentally sound decisions at the store. Reduce waste *before* you buy!" So far, so good.

"Packaging accounts for one-third of all solid waste. Packaging is the fourth largest industry in the United States. If we cut down on the *quantity* of packaging we buy—that is, buy products with less packaging or buy fewer products—we can reduce the amount of garbage we create. Likewise, if we make our purchasing decisions based on the *kind* of package the product comes in, we can reduce garbage by buying recycled or recyclable containers."

All right. Now here comes the troubling stuff:

"Paper and cardboard are preferable container materials because they break down, or degrade, over time. Plastic does not. Items are packaged for many reasons—for freshness or cleanliness, to prevent breakage or theft, or to catch your eye and make a sale. Choose the package that meets your needs and resist the package that doesn't—especially if it's plastic."

There's more. "Technology designed for burning plastic for energy," says the poster, "is potentially dangerous and may not be cost effective. In other words, we're almost certainly stuck with our plastic waste."

For more information on the Precycling program, call (415) 644-8631.